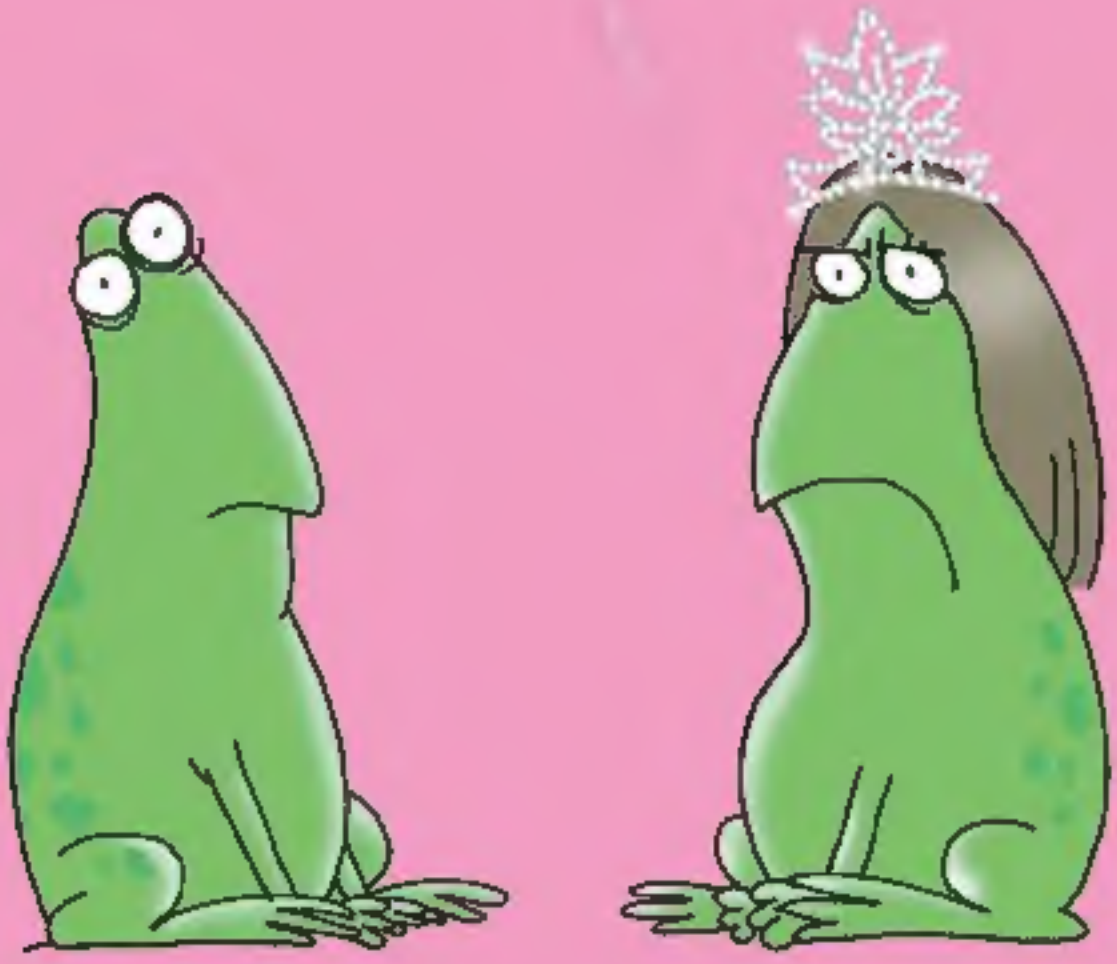
From *New York Times* bestselling author Jim Benton

DEAR DUMB DIARY,

Am I THE PRINCESS OR THE FROG?

SCHOLASTIC



Am i THE PRINCESS OR THE FROG?

THINK YOU CAN HANDLE JAMIE KELLY'S FIRST YEAR OF DIARIES?

#1 LET'S PRETEND THIS NEVER HAPPENED

#2 MY PANTS ARE HAUNTED!

#3 AM I THE PRINCESS OR THE FROG?

#4 NEVER DO ANYTHING, EVER

#5 CAN ADULTS BECOME HUMAN?

#6 THE PROBLEM WITH HERE IS THAT IT'S WHERE I'M FROM

#7 NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR DUMBNESS

#8 IT'S NOT MY FAULT I KNOW EVERYTHING

#9 THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS AREN'T FOR

#10 THE WORST THINGS IN LIFE ARE ALSO FREE

#11 OKAY, SO MAYBE I DO HAVE SUPERPOWERS

#12 ME! (JUST LIKE YOU, ONLY BETTER)

AND DON'T MISS YEAR TWO!

YEAR TWO #1: SCHOOL. HASN'T THIS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH?

YEAR TWO #2: THE SUPER-NICE ARE SUPER-ANNOYING

YEAR TWO #3: NOBODY'S PERFECT. I'M AS CLOSE AS IT GETS.

YEAR TWO #4: WHAT I DON'T KNOW MIGHT HURT ME

Jim Benton's Tales from Mackerel Middle School

DEAR DUMB DIARY,

Am I THE PRINCESS OR THE FROG?

BY JAMIE KELLY

SCHOLASTIC INC.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereafter invented, without the express written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

e-ISBN 978-0-545-64944-5

Copyright © 2005 by Jim Benton

All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Inc.
SCHOLASTIC and associated logos are trademarks
and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.
DEAR DUMB DIARY is a registered trademark of Jim Benton.

First printing, June 2005

For All Good Dogs, and in particular a few that have trotted down the trail ahead of us: Max, Truffles, Josette, Max, Mimi, Billy, Sadie, and Henry.

Special thanks to:
Maria Barbo, Steve Scott,
Susan Jeffers Casel, and
Shannon Penney.

THIS DIARY PROPERTY OF Jamie Kelly

SCHOOL: Mackerel Middle School

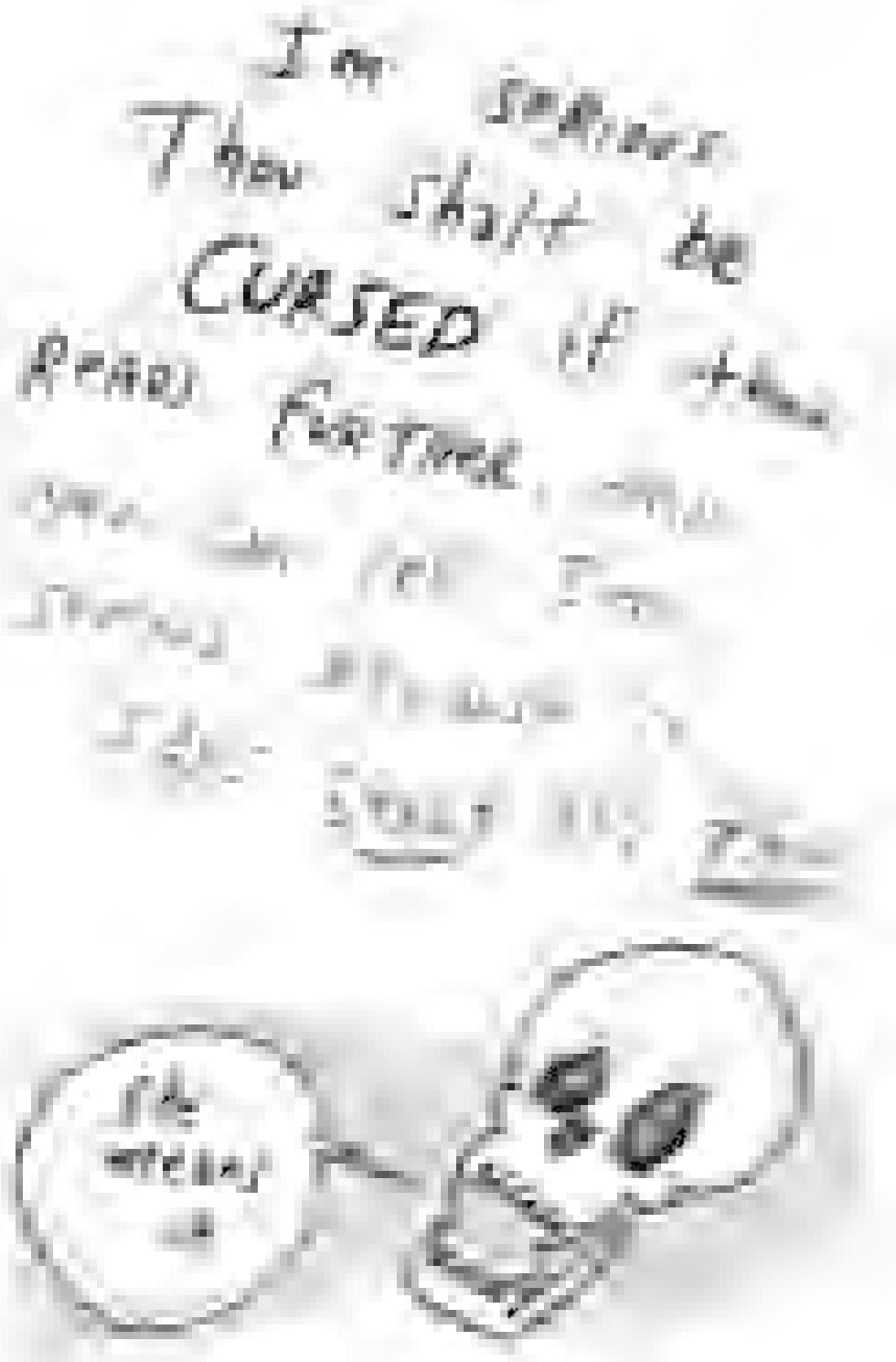
Locker: 101

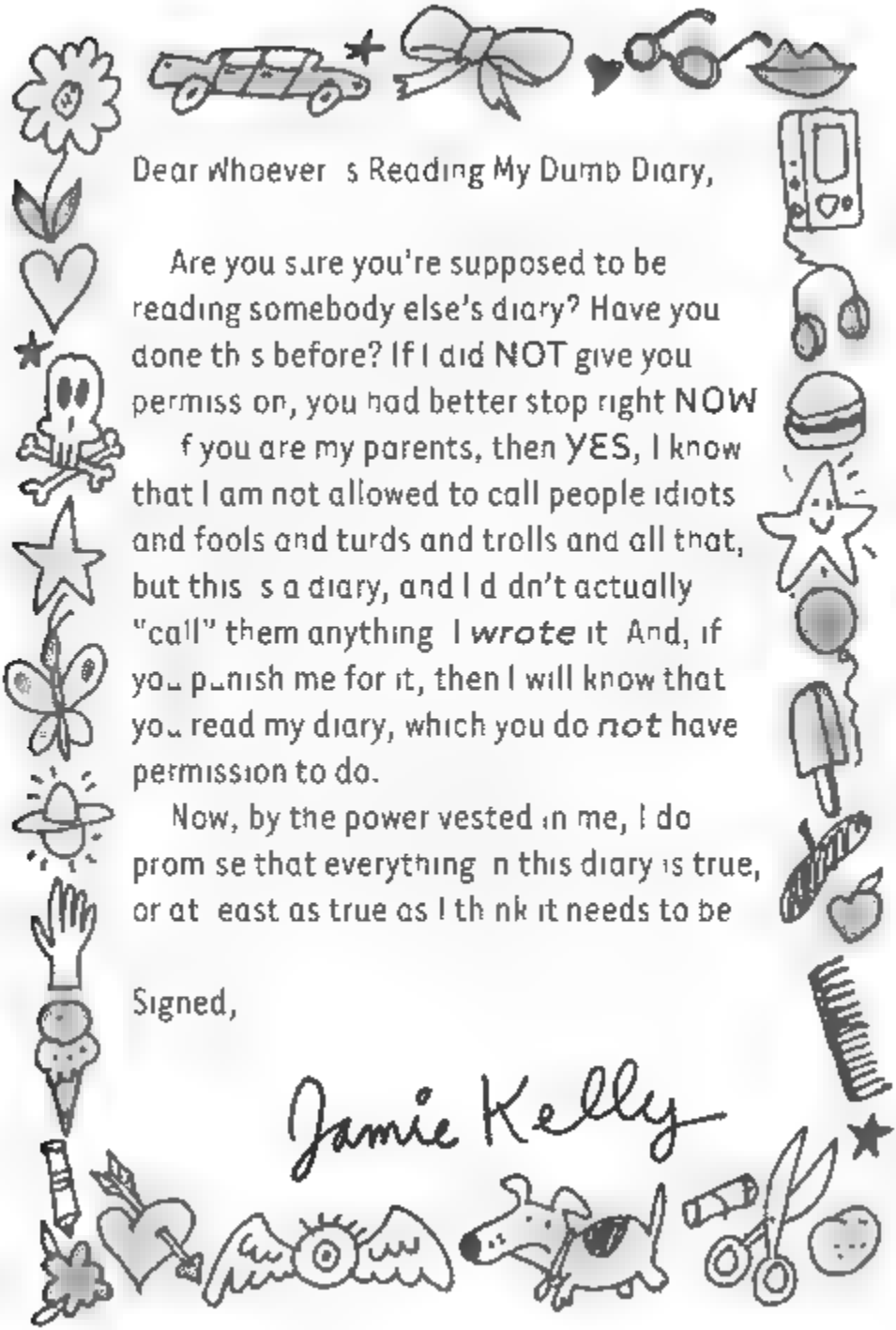
Best friend: Isabella

Destiny: Princess or Spy/Ballerina

Pet: Beagle-shaped thing

WARNING


CURSED
FOR THREE



Dear Whoever s Reading My Dumb Diary,

Are you sure you're supposed to be reading somebody else's diary? Have you done th s before? If I did NOT give you permiss on, you had better stop right NOW

f you are my parents, then YES, I know that I am not allowed to call people idiots and fools and turds and trolls and all that, but this s a diary, and I d dn't actually "call" them anything I *wrote* it And, if you punish me for it, then I will know that you read my diary, which you do *not* have permission to do.

Now, by the power vested in me, I do promise that everything n this diary is true, or at least as true as I th nk it needs to be

Signed,

Jamie Kelly

Saturday 31

Isabella was over for most of the day today and we worked out our entire future together. We're going to marry identical twins and live next door to each other and have exactly the same number of kids (nine girls, eight boys) and we'll time it so that they're all the same ages as each other's kids.

We'll have our own clothing store but we won't sell anything good to people we hate. Our husbands will be firemen or doctors or something, but they have to be the same thing so that neither one of us is richer than the other. And if one of our husbands gets in an accident and loses a foot or something, the other husband will have to cut his off, just to be fair.

I really didn't think this was a reasonable thing to expect from a husband, especially if instead of getting a foot cut off it's something like falling out of an airplane. But Isabella says that she is much more of an expert on guys than I am, and that our husbands will be so totally into us that they will probably come up with this idea by themselves, anyway.

Sunday 01

I really don't know what kind of meat was in the **Meat Thing**, but I'm sure that Mom has a cookbook somewhere called *101 Recipes Using Ingredients That Shun the Daylight.*

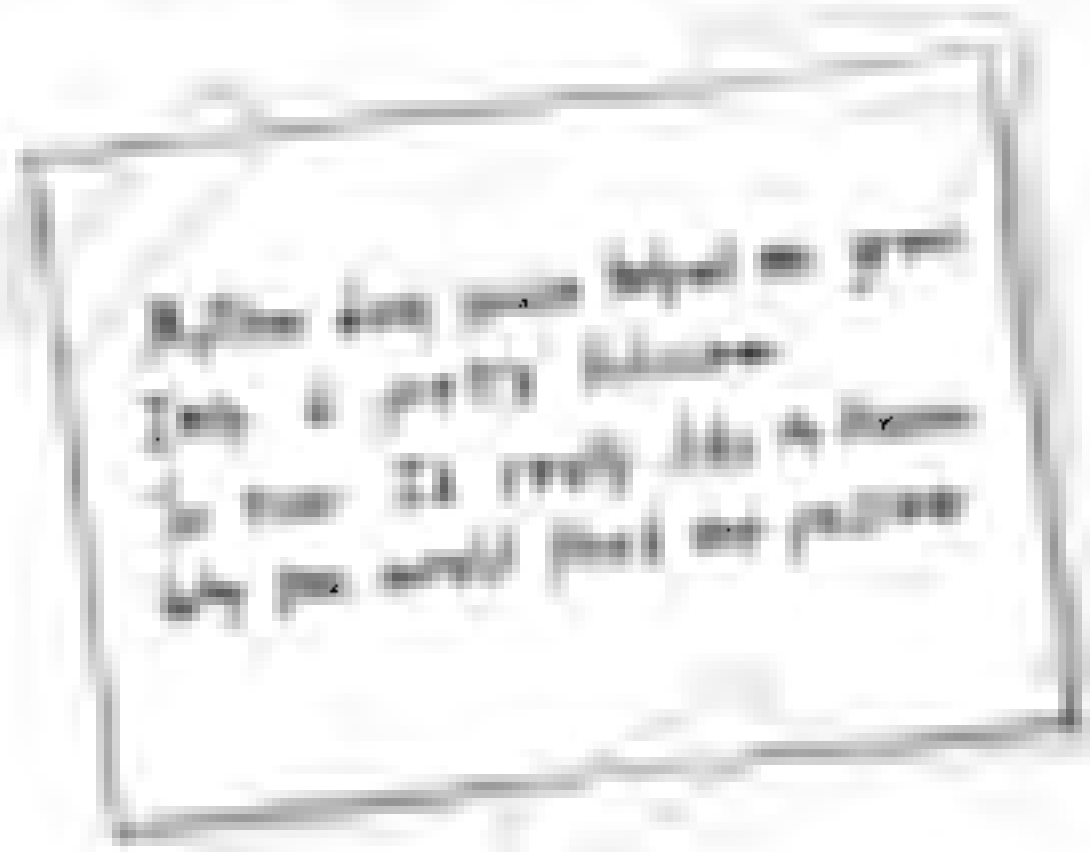
Dad and I have been trying not to complain about the food because a few weeks ago, Mom had one of her Nobody-Appreciates-How-Hard-It-Is-to-Make-Dinner-and-One-Day-You'll-Appreciate-My-Cooking episodes. In retrospect, Dad and I probably should not have held our noses all the way through dinner.

Fortunately, I had the foresight to make a candy necklace out of Rolaids, so I can kind of medicate myself throughout the meals. Dad's not so lucky.

WARNING TO MY FUTURE CHILDREN: f ever have children and they are reading my d ary right now, I want you to know, kids, that you must never ever ever eat Grandma's cooking. Also, My ittle Darlings, you are grounded for reading my diary, so go find Mommy right now and tell her what you've done, because you're in for a HUGE punishment.

And I'm telling Santa

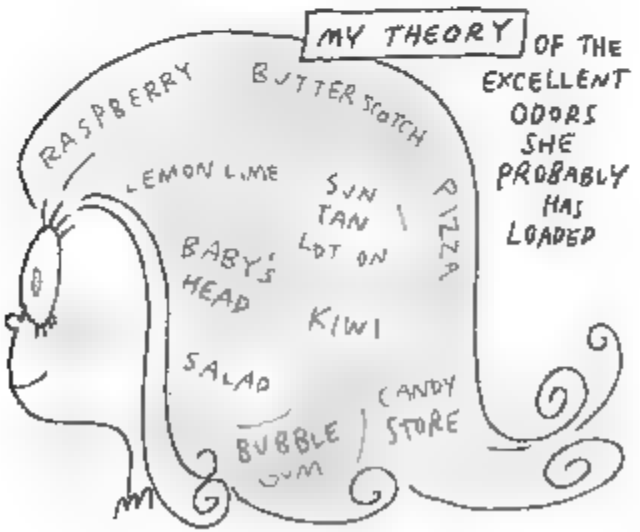
Children! Beware of Grandma's Baked Yuck!



Monday 02

Supposedly, Angeline has invented something called ZONE SHAMPOOING. The idea is that you shampoo each zone of your head with its own distinct fragrance of shampoo. Anytime Angeline wants to, she can flip her hair in one direction or the other and shoot a delicious waft of fragrance right at your unsuspecting nose. More diabolical yet, she can sequence her hair flips and combine fragrances so that maybe you think you just smelled apple pie with vanilla cinnamon ice cream, or maybe a kiwi strawberry smoothie with a touch of key lime.

Why would somebody want to do this evil thing?

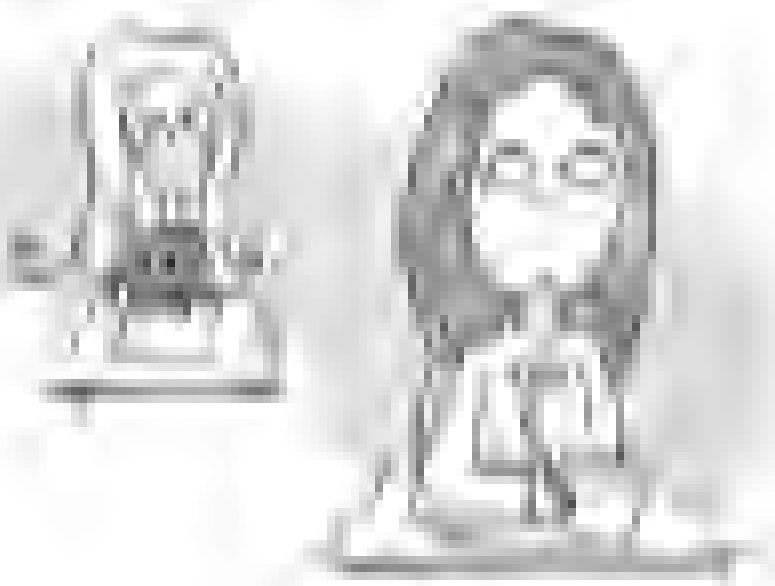


Well, Dumb Diary, I can tell you why somebody might NOT want to do this thing. Today I gave Zone Shampooing a try, and when I attempted to shoot Hudson Rivers (eighth-cutest boy in my grade) a snootful of Raspberry Delight (right side of head) combined with Coconut Madness (left lower quadrant of head), my English teacher, Mr. Evans—who was walking by at that exact moment—saw my attempt and thought I was having a seizure. He took me to the office, and the school nurse made me lie down on the cot for a while.

Then, at lunch, Isabella admitted that maybe she didn't have the story straight and might have made some of it up. I don't really blame her, though — it sounds so much like something Angeline might do that if I had made it up myself, I probably would have believed it, too.

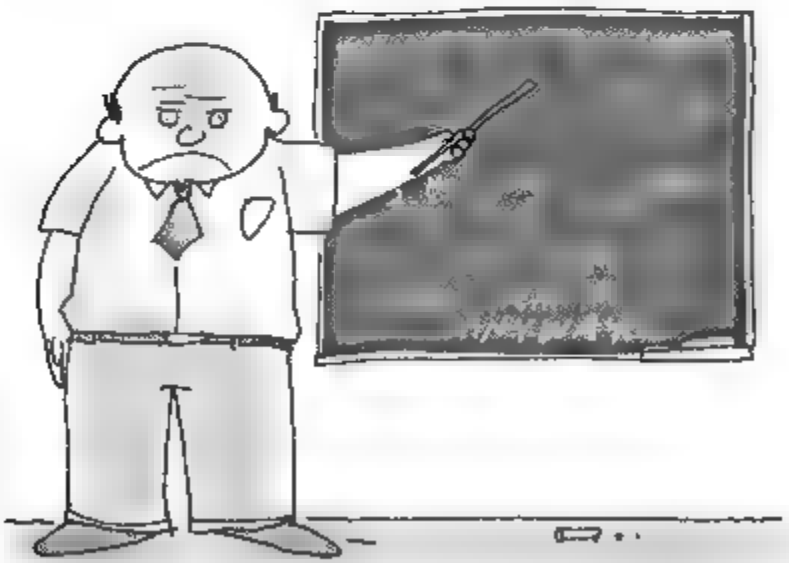
Other things Isabella can't remember if she really heard or just made up.
You can play a slice of Baloney in a DVD player
Some perfume has whale vomit in it
Here, we throw rice at weddings. In Japan, they throw hamburgers.
It is medically impossible to put on mascara with your mouth shut

Tuesday 03



Even though Mr. Evans was pretty sure I was going mental, he still made sure that I caught the next big assignment on the way out the door. Now that we're done with poetry, we have to select a popular fairy tale and write a report about it.

See, some teachers don't care if you're sick they still make you do your work. I heard that one time this kid had one of his legs chopped off by a snow blower on the way to school, but since he had Mr. Evans, the kid dragged himself to school anyway, and Mr. Evans is so strict that he marked the kid *partially* absent.



[illegible]

[illegible]

Had I known that she was going to buddy me up with Angeline on the project, I would have used a much stronger dirty look. Possibly even ***Dirty Look Number Eleven.***

(Note: It's important to practice your dirty looks and keep them numbered. Never try to mix them. Once I detonated numbers 8 and 4 at the same time, and it came out looking like a smile. It's a long story, but that accidental smile is why I unintentionally went with my aunt one time when she needed to shop for her big old bras.)

Our photo pro,ects are going to go up in the lunchroom at the end of the month for the whole school to see Angeline already had an idea for ours and, before talking t over with me, she just blurted it out in front of the ent re class. That's r ght, Dumb Diary, She just "cuts the idea" the way some people cut farts.

Angeline suggested that she and I collect p ctures of all the teachers when they were kids and make a big col age out of them so that everybody can see for themselves, I guess, just how punishing time is on the human body. Miss Anderson loved the idea, of course As anybody can plainly see, she is beautifu now so she was for sure even more beautifu before she became a teacher (since there is no way that working with kids can improve your appearance).

So she to d us to get started

My so-called best friend, Isabella — who may be missing that part of the body where you keep your soul (It might be called the Soul Hole I'm not a doctor.) — announces that *her* photography project is to put up pictures of everyone in the class with their pet, to show how people and their pets look alike.

"*PEOPLE AND THEIR PETS LOOK ALIKE,*" she says.

First off, my pet is a dog, which is the international symbol for Ugly Girl, and my dog is the dog that other dogs are grateful that they at least don't look as bad as

I don't want to say that Stinker is ugly, but the only reason other dogs sniff him is to see which end is his face

So, thanks a lot, Isabella.

Thursday 10

Friday 06

Dear Dumb Diary,

I'm not sure what happened to M ss Bruntford. She wasn't in school today, and there was something so p·easant about t ail that I temporarily forgave ·sabe la for her stupid peop e-pet ookalike dea and we ate together at lunch Isabella says she heard that Miss Bruntford is in the hospital with **Spontaneous Diverticulosis** or something It's one of those old-people diseases that makes them ta k about their bowe s to others She says we're getting a new cafeteria monitor next week

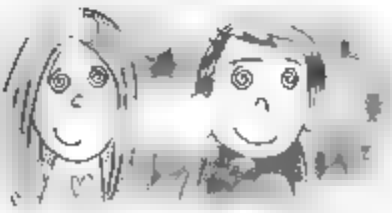
I never wished for Miss B to get sick At least, I never actual y threw more than three bucks in quarters into a founta n when I wished I for it But f she had to get sick, t rea y is sort of like an **Act of Justice** that it was the meat loaf that d d her in.

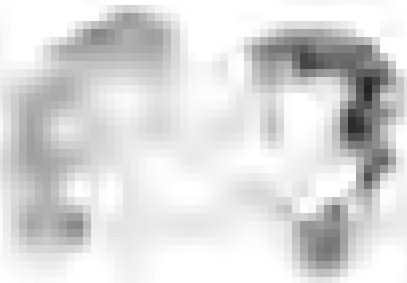
It almost makes me believe that, in addition to fairies like the Tooth Fairy, there's a Fairy of Food Poisoning

The Fairy of Food Poisoning
Brings Gut distress to the mean
The Ugly Fairy
Brings WARTHOGGISH Features to the Stuck-Up
The Flub Fairy
Brings flub to under Grandma's arms

So Pinsetti is standing there with Isabella, and I'm just staring at him and I think he's trying to say something to me. But just as I went to perform **Dirty Look Number Four**, Angeline walks past and I'm sure she flipped a blast of weapons-grade **Raspberry Wonderfulness** directly at us from one of her many alleged Shampoo Zones.

Pinsetti and I are both momentarily stunned by the irresistible delicousness of Angeline's attack and, against our will, we both sort of smile because — I mean, let's be real — you can't help but smile a little when you are awash in a cloud of **Raspberry Wonderfulness**





Saturday 07

Dear Dumb Diary,

Saturdays are so cool that I will never ever figure out why they only made one of them per week. Here's my idea for a whole new lineup of days:

SATURDAY
I can't improve on Saturday so I'm not changing it
SUNTURDAY
This will be another Saturday, but it will also have the aimless Quality of a Sunday.
MONTURDAY
You can't get all your fun into just two Saturdays, so this is a bonus third
WEEKSDAY
NOBODY LIKES WEEKDAYS. (THAT'S WHY THEY'RE CALLED "WEAK DAYS") LET'S GET THEM ALL OVER IN A SINGLE DAY
FRIDAY
OK, IT'S A WEEKDAY BUT FRIDAYS ARE VERY IMPORTANT for PLANNING YOUR SATURDAYS
FRIDAYNIGHTDAY
THIS IS AN ENTIRE DAY THAT'S NOTHING BUT FRIDAY NIGHT, ALL DAY LONG.

For the rest of the day, I was grabbing the phone every time it rang, figuring it was Isabella cal ng me back Late in the afternoon, some woman who sounded familiar called for Mom, but I couldn't qu te place the voice Afterward, Mom was all exc ted but wouldn't tell me who t was or why she called. Some dumb Mom-thing, I'm sure, like they're going shopp ng for wind ch mes or something.

Other Dumb Things Moms Have
Need for Birdbaths
Del ght over tiny decorative soaps you're not allowed to actually use
Infantile joy when using puppetish oven mitts

Sunday III

When I went downstairs for breakfast this morning, Mom was bustling around the kitchen all giddy and dazed, and said I could have candy for breakfast if I would just go eat it in front of the TV.

For as long as I can remember, Mom has practiced this sort of Motherly Irresponsibility whenever she wanted me out of the way. One time, I walked in on her when she was trying to force her mombutt into an old miniskirt and she was so embarrassed, she told me I could go outside and throw apples at passing cars if I'd leave her alone.

I knew her judgment was way off on that one so I didn't take her up on it, but candy for breakfast seemed only mildly self-destructive. I accepted her terms and let her have her ridiculous secret kitchen time.

Later on, Mom was cooking up a storm ike most storms, we anticipated great devastation in its wake You'll recall that Mom has cooked up a few memorab e storms in the past. .

But here's the we rd thing She cooked t, but she never actually inflicted it upon us We smelled her cooking, we heard her cooking St nker even took the customary precaution of hid ng h s dog dish But for some reason, Mom just packed it a. up in a Tupperware container, stuck it in the fridge, and ordered a pizza.

Believe me Dad and I did not ask questions. That would be like reminding your executioner not to forget his ax tomorrow

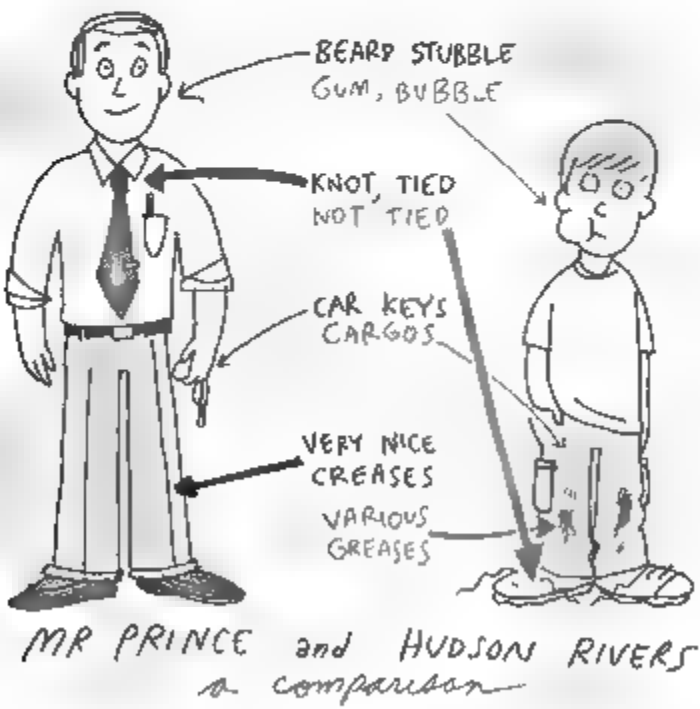
Monday 09

Then we discussed *Snow White,* and *Rapunzel* and *Little Red Riding Hood,* and when Mr. Evans asked us what we thought of these fa ry tales, I said that it was com.ng through loud and clear that back in olden t mes, if you had a real y weird dumb name, you were probably just waiting for something disastrous to happen to you. I mean, you never hear about *Jennifer and the Seven Dwarves* or *Steve and the Three Bears.* Mr. Evans probably agreed w th me deep down, but he bulged his Big Ol' Ugly Head Vein at me a little, anyway.

Lunchtime, Dumb Diary, was really something interesting today. It was even more interesting than when the lunch ladies had that dispute that started with angry words over who looked better in their hairnet, and ended with paramedics siphoning cranberry sauce out of a semi-plugged lunch lady esophagus. (Note. In these sorts of situations, always bet on the more massive lunch lady.)

As I said, the schoo has somebody filling in for Miss Bruntford while her organs are hea ng or whatever His name is Mr Pr nce ("Prince!" Couldn't you just d e?) He's a student teacher, which is a person who wil become a teacher unless someth ng better occurs to them at the last m nute

He s older without being fu y old yet, which means he probably shaves more than twice a week but still does not have ha ry ears.



But Isabella was impolitely hinting that Mr Prince would like her better than me, which is pretty rude since I had already started thinking he would like me better than her, and I felt like I had to tell her so and also execute a mild version of **Dirty Look Number Three.** Plus, I may have pointed out how her head is almost a perfect sphere, and she is NOT at all secure about her cranial roundness.

This turned out to be a pretty bad idea since — and I have shared this with you before, Dumb Diary — Isabella has older brothers, which means she is very good at all forms of fighting.

Isabella stood up in the middle of the cafeteria, smiled at me and said, with perfect sinister cruelty: "Let's see how he likes you when he sees your picture hanging up in the cafeteria side-by-side with your dumpy little beagle."

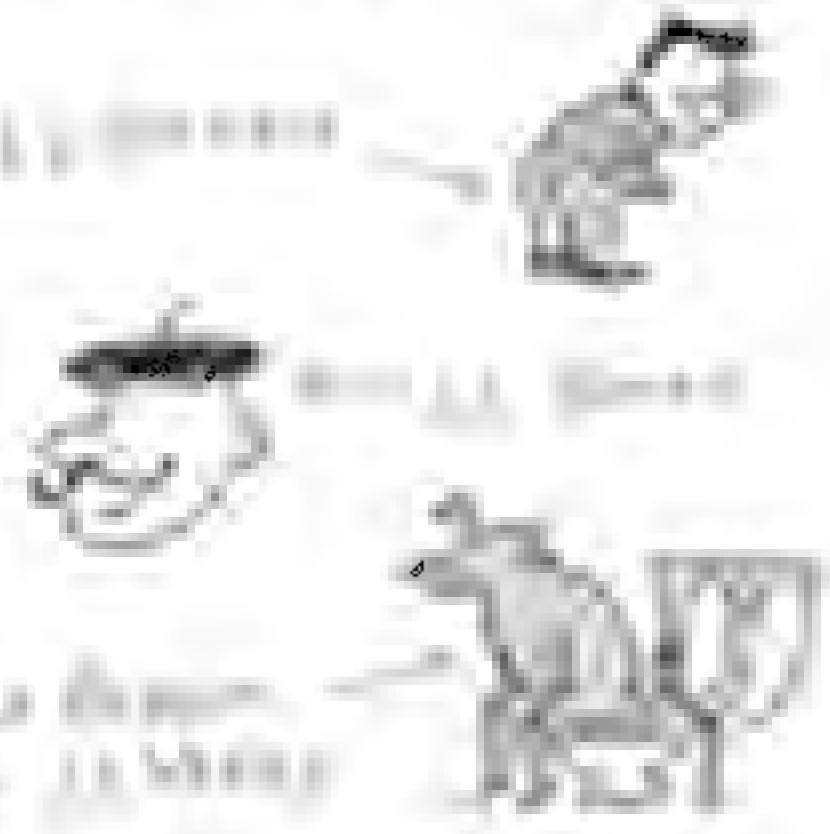
Tuesday 10

None of th s rea y matters much, because I had a long conversation over lunch today with Mr. Prince. (Couldn't You Just Die?)

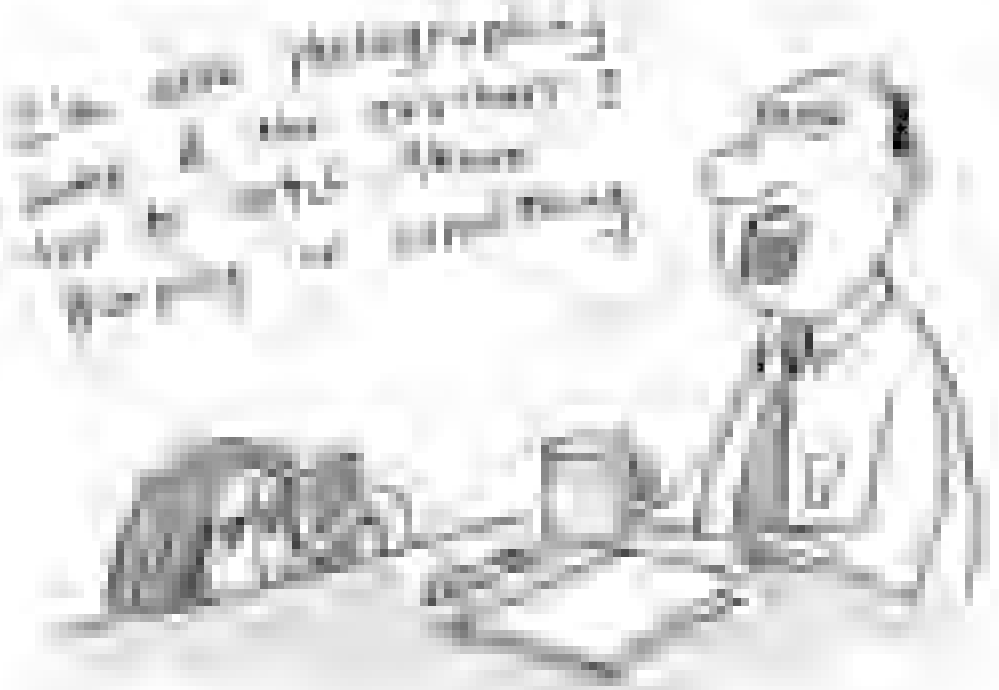
It happened as I was taking my tray to the trash I had done a particularly thorough job of abusing my leftover food today I had shoved the macaroni and cheese into a large wad, stuck a carrot stick straight up in it, and dumped chocolate milk over the whole thing.

Mr Prince (C.Y.J.D.?) was standing by the trash, and when I went to slide t in, he looked at it and said, "That a model of the Eiffel Tower?" and kind of laughed a little

"*Sí,*" said, not wanting to miss out on h s reference to All Things French. And then threw my garbage in the can and ran away.



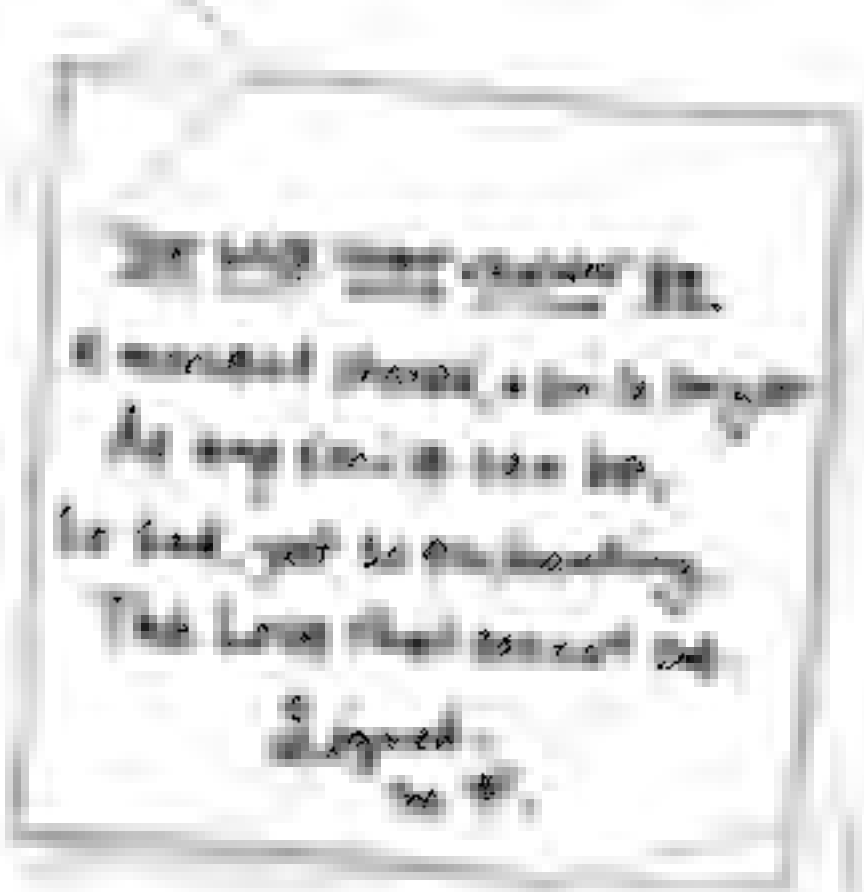
Wednesday 11



Seriously. "Why ***wouldn't*** a fat ugly beagle chase after twelve dollars worth of pork chops?" I screamed as I picked up the raw chops and put them in a trash bag, out in the rain, alone in the dark. The neighbors watched me from behind their curtains like the timid, tattletaling turds they are.

Anyway, now that I think about it, even if Stinker had run away from home, he might only be gone three or four days. He's done it before, and that's usually how long it takes before he decides to come back.

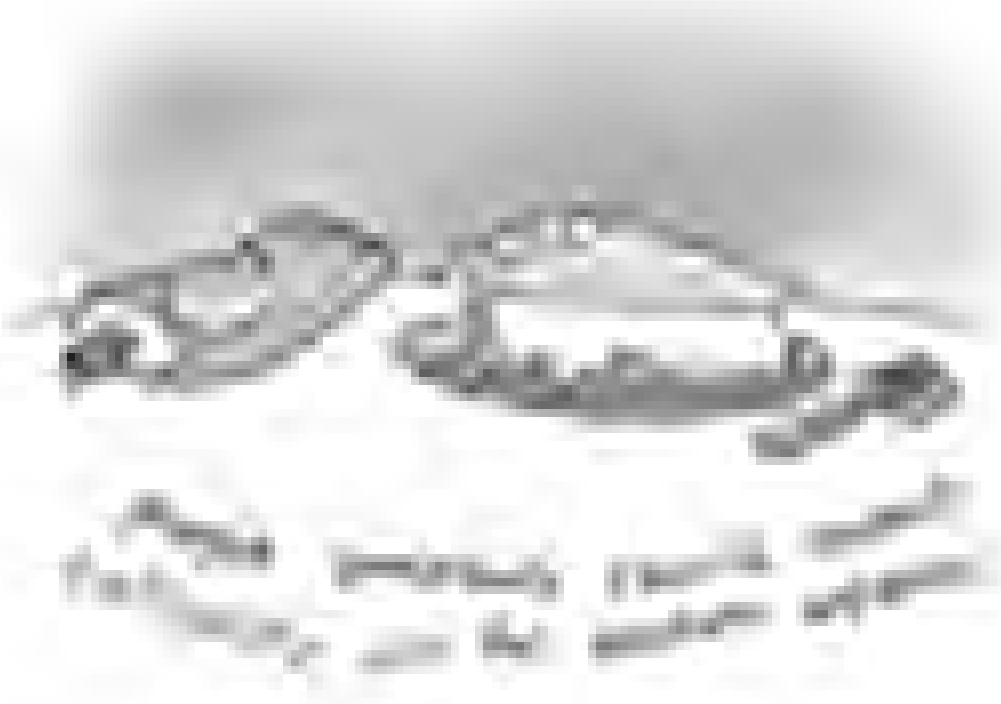
Thursday 12

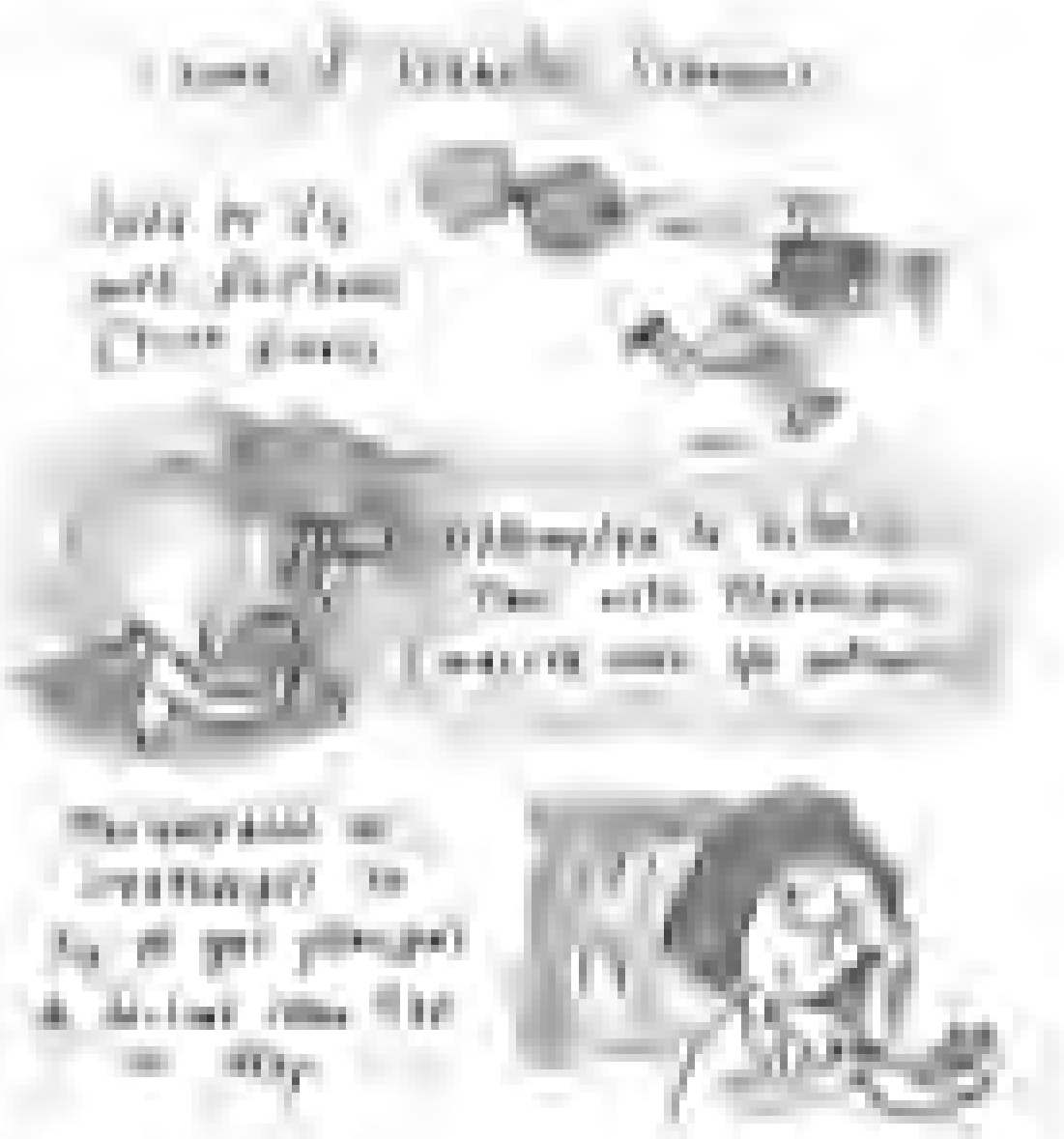


CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? "M.P." It's from Mr. Prince! I would love to smash this note in Angelique's face and also smash it slightly lighter in Isabella's. It's ME that he noticed. Not Blondie, Not Sphere-Head. ME! And even though he knows that we can never be together because I am normal aged and he is old — he still needed to give his heart voice. How he must suffer and ache. I wonder if he yearned for me. This could be the first time I had caused a yearn. (Or is that a "yearning"? "yearnfulness"? "yearnation"?)

I showed the poem to Isabella and I think she may be a little jealous. I wonder if Mr. Prince would wait for me to grow up?

Friday 13





I made another little garbage scu pture for Mr. Pr nce today. This one was a wadded-up lump of cheeseburger with some fr es stuck in it to resemble the Statue of Liberty's head (in keeping with our cute French thing) Before I slid it into the trash can, I tried to direct Mr. Pr nce's attention to it with head nods and eyebrow twitches until I saw Mr. Evans coming at me with that **You're-Having-Another-Seizure** look in his eyes and had to dump and run.

I gave some more thought to help ng Stinker run away from home th s afternoon. After school, I made h m watch a show on wolves on The D scovery Channel, hoping that maybe it wou d make him want to run wild and perhaps haul his chubby rump up some mountain and howl at the moon. But I don't think he understood.

Not even when I got a b g round pillow and tried to make him howl at it by holding it over his face. I was only p aying, but Stinker seemed to get a little panicky, and his wolf howl sounded a little like a whine.

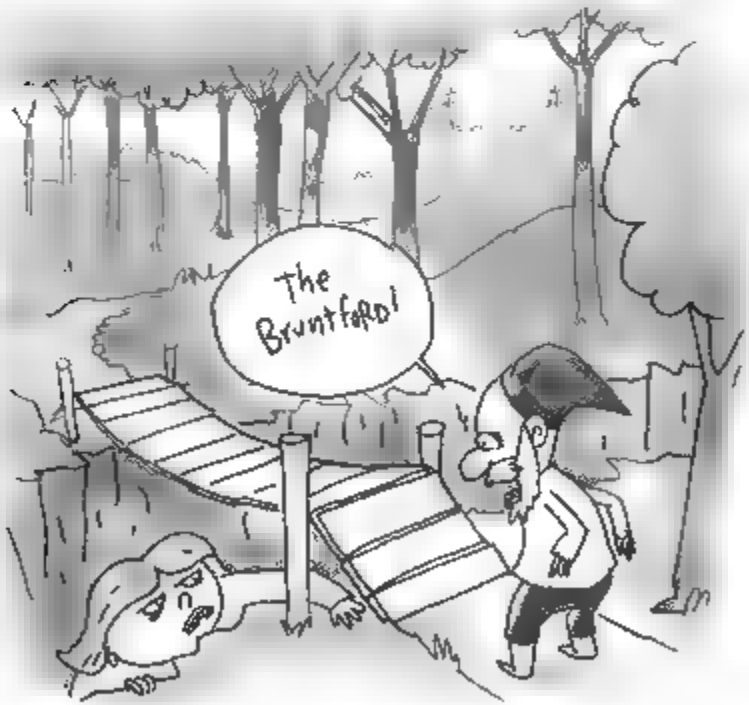
He was so upset afterward that it took him, like, thirty minutes of constant gnaw ng on h s chew toy (which I have named **Grossnasty**) to calm down.

I have no idea how I m going to avoid giving Isabella a photo of Stinker.

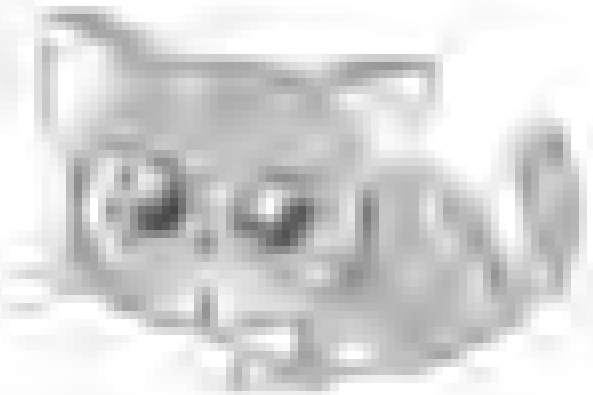
Late-Breaking News: Carryout tacos for dinner. Get th s: Mom didn't have time to make dinner because she went to Miss Bruntford's house for a v sit. MISS BRUNTFORD'S HOUSE!

Surpr sed, Dumb Diary? Me, too. I mean: A **house??** I always assumed Miss Bruntford lived under a bridge, where she asked travelers r ddles before she'd let them pass.

Since when would Mom v sit M ss Bruntford?



Saturday 14



"Where'd you get that cat?" she said, in one of those whispers where you're kind of yell ng and whispering at the same time I told her I found it on her own. She said that it belonged to one of the neighbors and they were looking for it and I had to give it to her to return to them That was all fine with me, but I couldn't help noticing that Isabel a was breathing just like Stinker d d when had him under the pillow during his wolf tra ning

Then she took the k tten and said the mal trip was cance ed, she'd call me later, and then *SLAM.* Just that fast, had been de-kittened, de-malled, and blown off by my best friend

When I was walking home, thinking about things I'd like to happen to Isabel a, and trying to look sad (I'm rather pretty when I'm sad), had that feeling you get when you're being watched. I looked up, and there, in a m nivan — which was not the g ant golden carriage drawn by the perfect white horses you might expect — was Angeline. And when we .ocked eyes, she waved. Not a b.g You're-My-Best-Friend wave, but not one of those weird upr ght rotations that the girls on parade floats do, either

Th s in itself was odd, as Angeline and are not friends because she is too beautifu and stuck-up to be a friend, but what was *really* odd was her mom . . .

I think this was the f rst t me I had ever seen Angel ne's mom, and I don't know what I would have expected, b_t t was not at a what I saw

Yo_ know when a movie star br ngs one of her parents to an awards ceremony and you always think Wow Her parents are as _gly as mine How did THAT happen?

That's kind of what t was like with Angeline's mom. Except not n the face.

Years ago, my folks and I were at the zoo, and a three-year old, think ng he was ooking at a porcupine or a sloth or something, tr.ed to feed a peanut to the back of my head. t was at that moment that I knew had The World's Worst Hair. That is, until now.

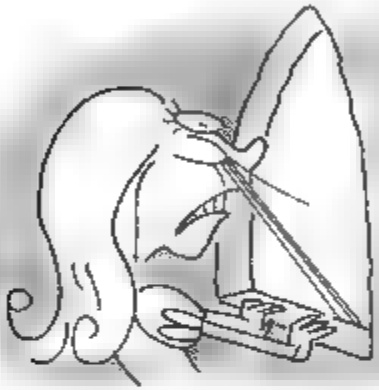
Angeline's mom had Angeline's beautiful face, but growing out in curly shiny sprouts here, and straight dry wisps there, her hair looked as though the stylist had misplaced her scissors and just tried chewing it off

A handful of clips and ties and barrettes did nothing to improve things. It only made it look like she had stumbled into the display rack on her way out of the salon.

I believe that, somehow, while she was pregnant, the tiny, evil infant Angeline spawn had totally sucked all the quality out of her mother's hair. I mean, what else could it be? Unless

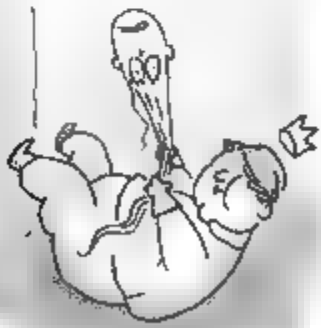
Sunday 16

I'm sure that Angeline is doing her report on *Rapunzel*. I mean, how could she NOT do it on *Rapunzel*? Here are a few versions of Rapunzel I'd like to see Angeline star in.



The Prince is allergic to Rapunzel's shampoo and has to climb up her eyelashes instead

The Prince is so fat that he pulls off Rapunzel's head.



Prince falls for a princess with brown hair of reasonable length. Rapunzel starves

Monday 16

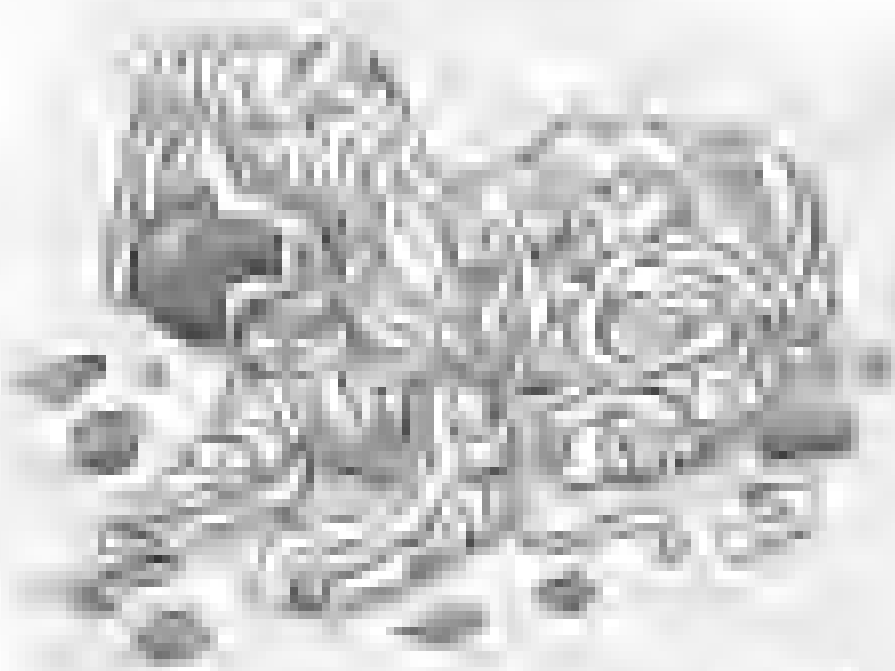
Tuesday 17

I said it taught us that pretty young maidens break deals all the time, even if you give them a mountain of gold and get them out of jail. If anything, I said, these pretty young maidens are the cause of all the trouble in the world, breaking into bears' houses and busting up their junk, antagonizing wolves, getting lost in the woods, making their stepmothers crazy. It goes on and on.

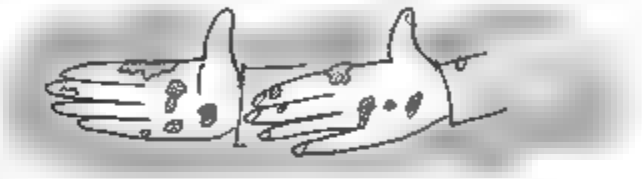
Mr. Evans's vein throbbed, and he said I was the first student that he had ever heard of rooting *for Rumplestiltskin* and **against** *Red Riding Hood*, which I thought might mean I was a genius.

But failing to cheer for the Gold locks type is evidently a symptom of seizurism in Mr. Evans's book. So he sent me down to the nurse's office AGAIN for a little cot time. It's not a big deal anymore The office ladies know me now and they just wave me in and make myself comfortable They even gave me my own key to the cot room this time and said that if I want different drapes in there or something, I can decorate it any way I want since I am the only one using it This made them laugh at me a little, which made me say something like "old bats" or "old hags" or something like that. Anyway, I had to give the key back, and probably the drapes are out.

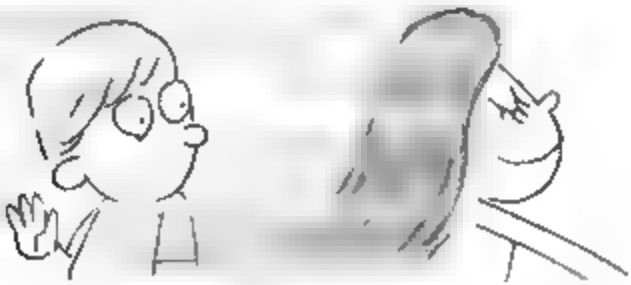
Wednesday 18



As I slid my love tribute into the garbage with a sad, slippery smush, Mr. Prince said that I had done a fabulous job and that, even covered in spaghetti sauce, my hands still looked like beautiful pet te ittle doves that were bleeding badly (and at wh ch somebody had thrown ,ell ·0)

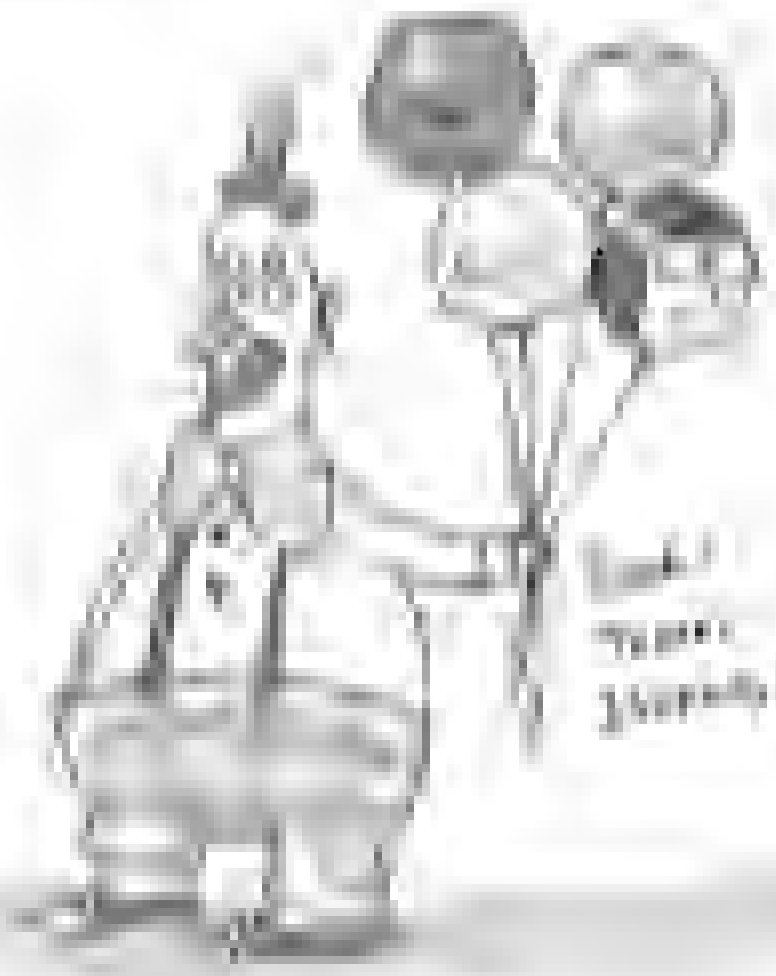


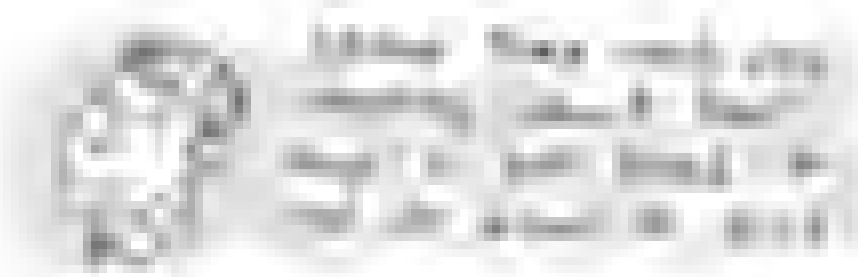
He didn't exactly say that mouthfully. He said it more with his eyes Or maybe I read his m nd I don't know Anyway, when I turned around, Hudson was right behind me in line and he said "Hi," but since I'm sort of nvolved w th Mr Pr nce right now, I had taken a few steps before I even realized that Hudson had been speak ng to me, so I didn't respond



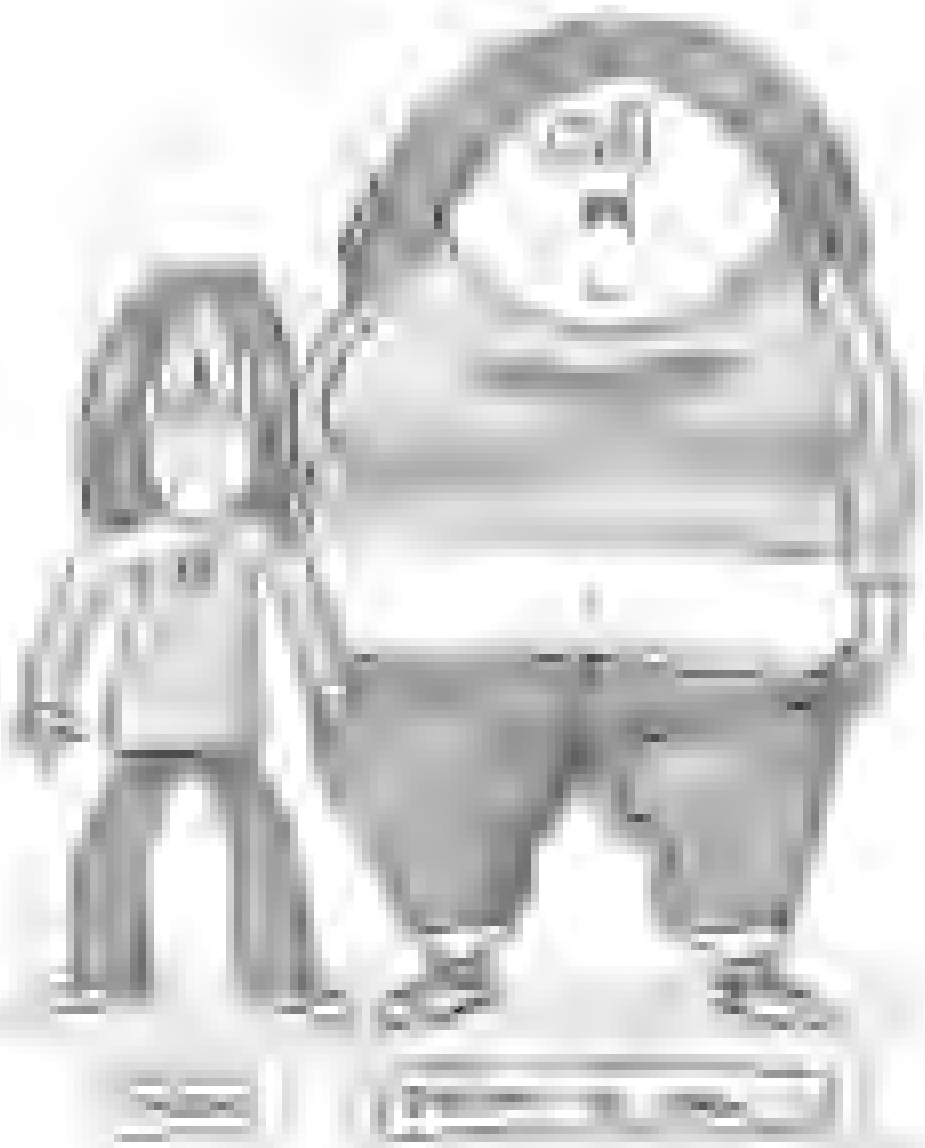
Thursday 19

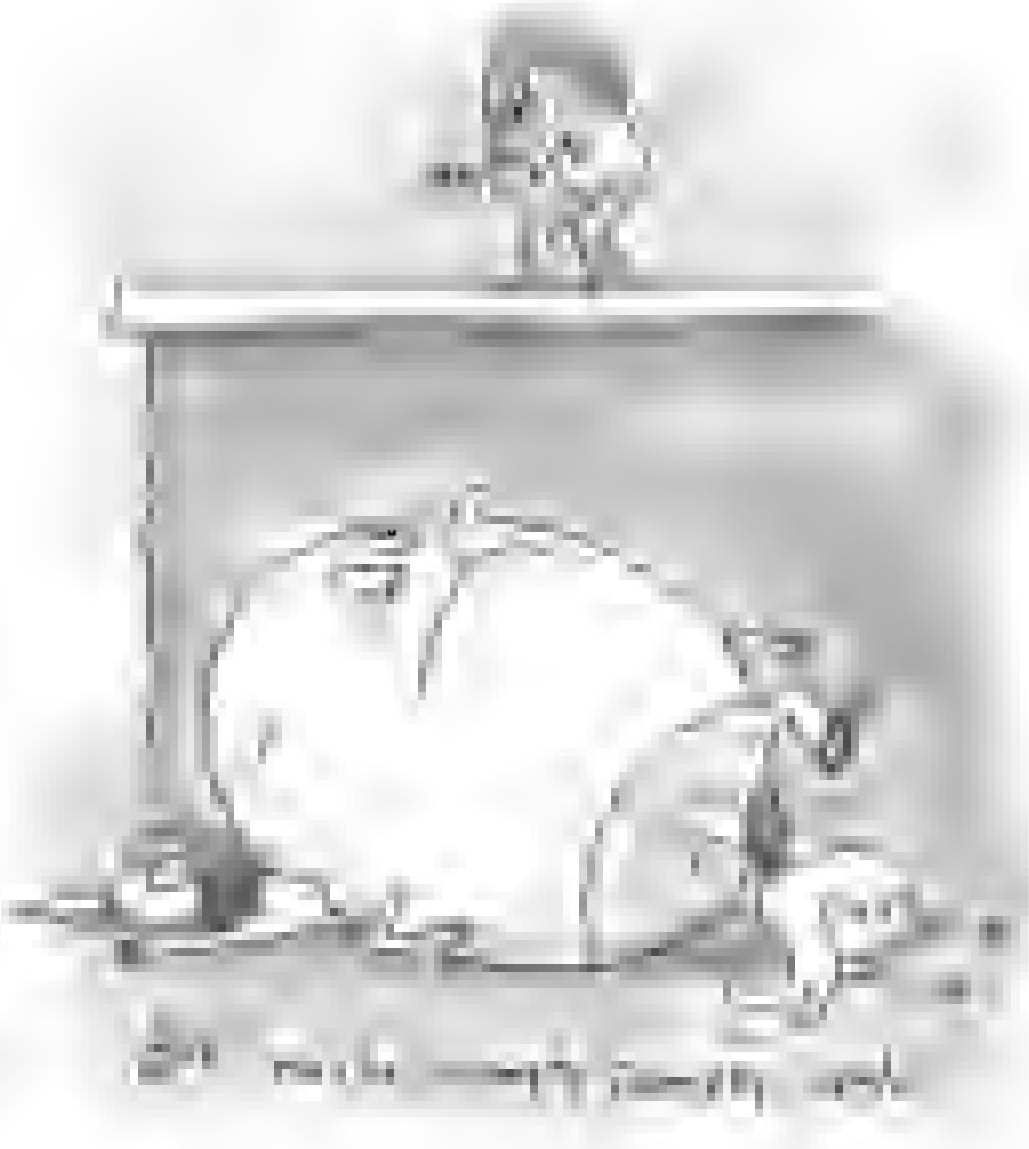
Dear Diary,





Friday 20



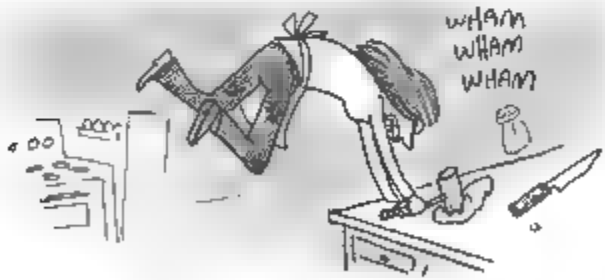


Saturday 21

"Oh, good," she lied.

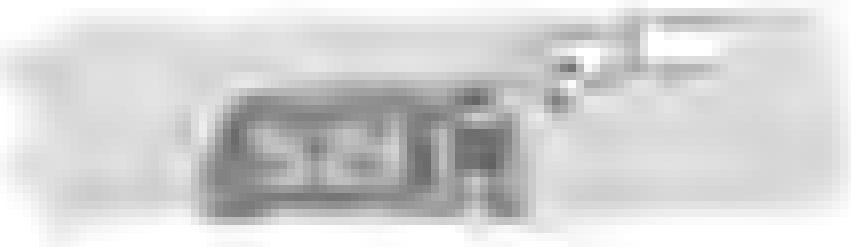
Isabella can lie to a most anybody but me. I can always spot her deceptions, and she usually doesn't bother even trying. The fact that she was even trying indicated that she was really and truly desperate.

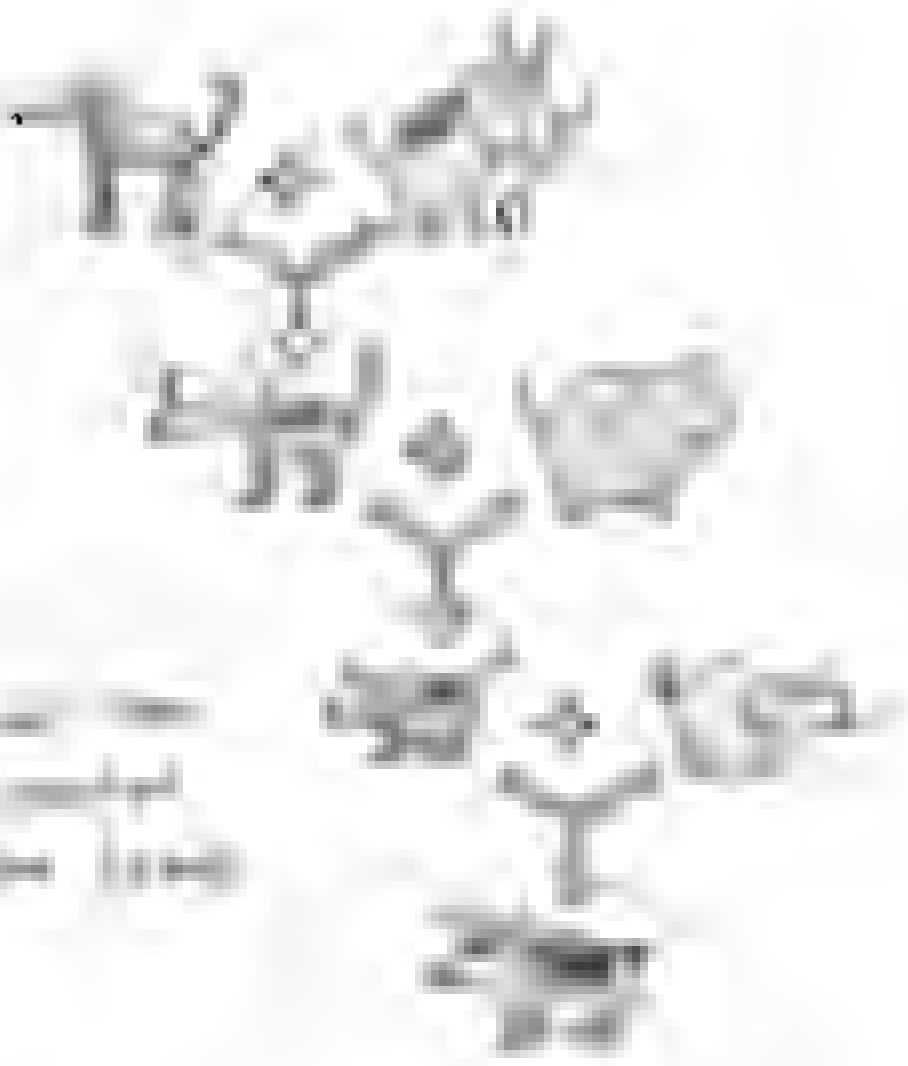
"My neighbors lost those two kittens that you have there, as well as this third kitten, which I found just before you got here. Let me have them all and I'll return them promptly to their rightful owners, which is not me. And hurry up, because my mom is here and I don't want her to see them, because (Isabella was really groping for an explanation here) because my . . . mom has . . . a . . . real . . . soft . . . spot . . . for . . . baby . . . animals."



Isabella's mom is really nice and everything, but a soft spot for baby animals? I've seen her pound veal like it owed her money.

Sunday 21





And I learned that there's another thing that beagles were bred to do: **Not Give Up.** Stinker was not going to let go of Grossnasty for anything, not even to avoid being dragged behind a car.

Fortunately (for Stinker), Dad only went a block or so before he had to stop

For medicine? For gasoline? Nope.

Mom says she made a little loaf (remember that day when we smelled her cooking but she gave us pizza?) and took it over to Miss Bruntford's. Miss B. tried it, and asked Mom to make a big batch to try on the kids this week at school.

Mom says that Miss Bruntford knows the kids hate the school meat loaf, and she thinks my mom can solve the problem. Mom is so proud of herself that Dad and I were careful not to say anything discouraging. Though I did overhear Dad make a secret call to our insurance agent to see if we were covered if Mom food-poisoned an entire middle school.

When I looked in the kitchen, I saw what Stinker had seen. Not just a couple of meat loaves but countless steaming football-shaped meat lumps stacked on every counter.

And I understood. Stinker had done the math. He knows how much leftover meat loaf he is expected to eat from one single meat loaf. The leftovers he thought he was going to have to eat from this batch were just too much to bear.

Mom said that one day I'd appreciate her cooking, and she was right. Today I do.

Stinker has run away from home!

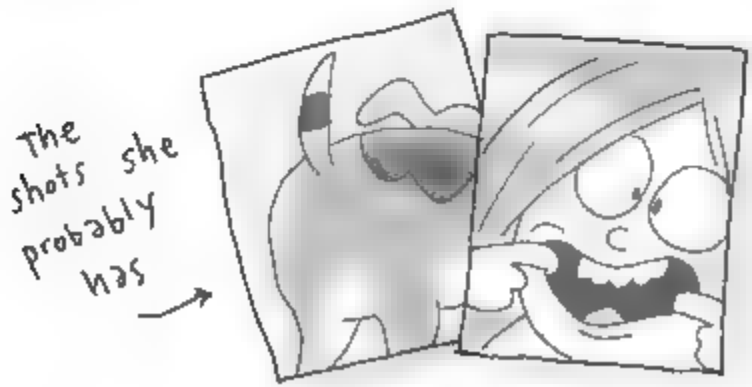
Monday 23

Dear Dumb Diary,

That's right! Stinker has run away from home, and Isabella *still* won't let me off the hook. She says the law states that unless the dog is gone forever, or has been given away, or the dog or turtle has been replaced with a different kitten, then it's still my dog, and that's what is going in the project.

I asked her if she meant "puppy" instead of "kitten," and she got all panicky again and said it could be a puppy or a kitten and, besides, those weren't her kittens.

Then she added that I wouldn't need to give her my photos. She already had pictures of me and Stinker that were going to work just fine for her art project.



He didn't notice, though. He wasn't standing by the garbage can today. Mr. Prince was off in a corner talking with Miss Anderson. Probably asking about me. He cares so much.

I think Hudson may have said hi to me today, but I didn't really notice, being so deeply immersed in the romantic fairy tale that is my life, although I still really can't tell if I'm the Princess or the frog. (This fairy-tale report for Evans is going to be tough.)

Also I was pretty hungry and wished that I had eaten Isabella's head instead of throwing it out.

Wait a second. Why did Isabella bring up those kittens again?

Tuesday 24

So she used her powers of persuasion on her dad to make him take her to the mall to get a kitten, which is one of the all-time cutest animals in the world.

But Isabella says that when as little as a week kitten cuteness starts to fade. And she wanted her pet to be *the* cutest one in the project so that everybody would say that Isabella was the cutest girl in our grade.

So she told her dad that the kitten had run away, and she cried and cried until he took her to get a new one. (As you might recall, Dumb Diary, Isabella's fake crying is unrivaled.)

The replacement kitten also started to lose its cuteness after a week, so she replaced it the same way. She's keeping the extras hidden in her room until the assignment is over.

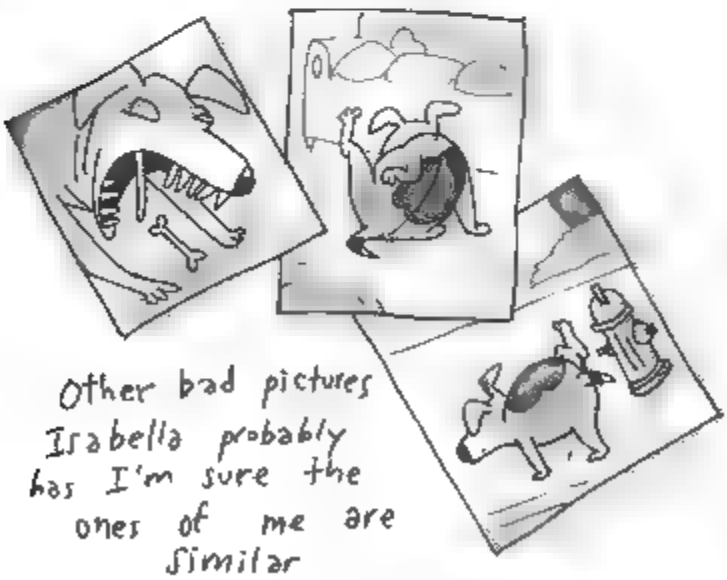
"But it doesn't work out fine for me. Not for ME!" I said.

And she countered with — get this —"What do you care, with your three boyfriends?"

"Three boyfriends?" said "WHAT three boyfriends?"

She never answered. She just said that she had even worse pictures of me and Stinker, and if I knew what was good for me, I'd just be quiet about the kittens until the assignment was over.

Isabella has older brothers and is therefore an expert in blackmail.



[illegible]

[illegible]

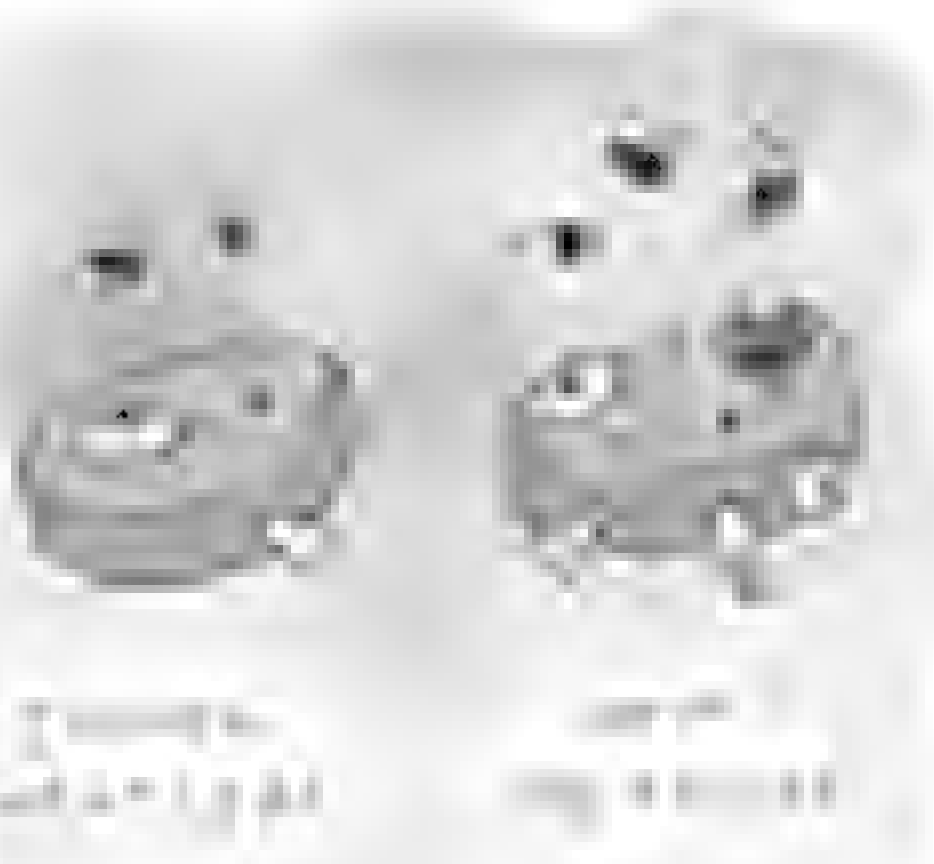
And at lunch today, Pinsett was jabbering so loud at me, I could n't hear what Mr. Prince and Miss Anderson were saying, but they were giggling, so I suppose it was about something funny I had said.

Thursday 26

The kids were s.tt ng down with Mom s meat loaf just as Miss Anderson waltzed into the cafeter.a and started hanging up the photo assignments. The embarrassment was going to be horr fic I started wonder.ng what my first few therapists were going to be like

But then a kid screamed as if something had stabbed the ins de of his mouth

It was the meat loaf!



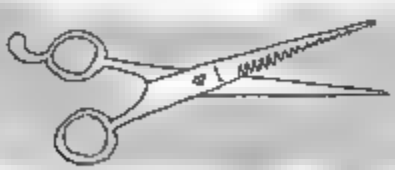
The cafeteria was empty of kids now, except for me and Angel ne — who had not yet taken a bite of her meat loaf She walked right over to Isabella s pro,ect, tore off the picture of Stinker, and replaced .t with a different photo she'd pulled out of her pocket.

It was a photo of a beaut fu , stunning, immaculately groomed beagle like you'd see on the cover of *American Beagle* magazine.

"It's Stinker," she said

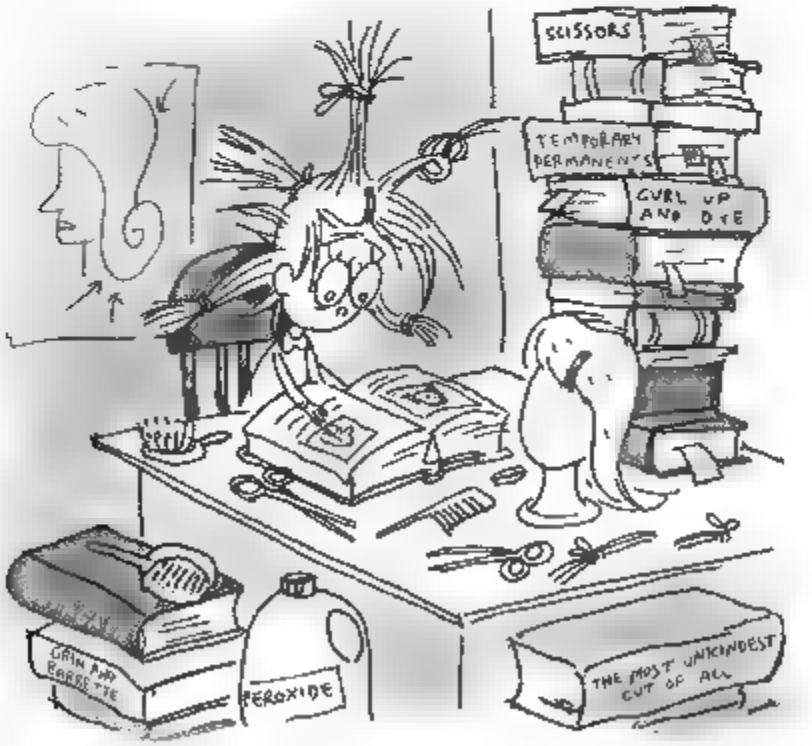
"I found him wandering around near our garbage cans last night. He was pretty scruffy-looking, so I washed him up a little. Looked like he had been dragged, if you can believe it.

"I started out with a warm mineral water rinse, then a massage with a diluted baby shampoo. I used a protein-enriched aloe base on his face and head, slowly moving toward a hydrating sheen enhancer along his back. I hit his legs with an herbal, of course, and tipped his tail with a peroxide scrubbing to bring out the white. Then I used a multiplex conditioner with some modifications made just for the complexities of a beagle's coat, and I trimmed him up, too, using my silver feathering-blade scissors that I bought on eBay. They only manufactured six of these, and five of them have never been outside Hollywood.



"My mom is as bad at hair as your mom is at cooking. When I was little, everybody made fun of me. It was pretty awful. I had to learn how to do my hair myself. I checked out books, I studied magazines. I've even examined the hair of the people in front of me at the movies. I learned everything there was to know. If I didn't take care of it myself, it would look just like hers."

I was actually starting to feel bad for Angeline.



To
Annie
From
Jamie

Suddenly, Angel ne s mom DID look a little fam l.ar to me. Maybe had seen her before. And way back then, Angeline's nair was, well, just as awful as her mom's.

I had given Angel ne this picture of me in kindergarten, and she was pass ng it off as Miss Bruntford as a joke. *Angeline* was kidding around with me!!!!

"We were in kindergarten together," I said numbly.

"Yeah," she said "You remember. I couldn't say 'Angeline' very wel back then I had a speech problem So I just went by Annie. We moved across town that summer, so I went to a different elementary school after that. That's why we never saw each other unti here at middle school."

So, were Angeline and I friends or something in kindergarten? I really can't remember kindergarten very well at all

Angeline sat back down and started eating the meat loaf.

"You're eat ng my mom's meat oaf?" asked her, and she pointed w th her fork at Mom, who was s tt ng alone and de,ected at a corner table, staring at p les and piles of her rejected steam ng meat loaf.

I sat down and started eating it, too. I owed it to Mom. This meat loaf drove St nker to Angel.ne, who gave him h s makeover, and it drove the kids out of the lunchroom long enough for us to take down the Baby Bruntford photo.

It may be nauseating, but who else's mom's meat loaf can do all that?

Miss Bruntford
Then
Now

Friday 27

Dear Dumb Diary,

Mr. Evans made me give my report first today, like he always does. I told him I had done my report on a few different fairy tales.

First, I talked about the witch in *Snow White,* and how she used a poison apple to make herself look better, but she could have just as easily used a poison meat loaf. Fairy tales remind us that there really are wicked, mean people walking around.

But fairy tales are short, and they leave out certain things, like, who do you think had to wash Rapunzel's hair after the Prince got his muddy boots all over it? That's right. Rapunzel did.

And you may think that these Princesses have it easy, but some of them started out as Ugly Ducklings, and some of the swans may actually end up as Ugly Ducklings. Fairies can do that to a swan, you know.

The ugly duckling that grew into an uglier duck

And then I looked right at Isabella as I finished up my report, and I said that Hansel and Gretel made a mistake with the bread crumbs. They almost got eaten up because of it, but they stuck together and they got out of the woods in one piece. And Isabella knew what I meant.

But I had to admit, I'm not sure I ever really figured out *The Frog Prince*.

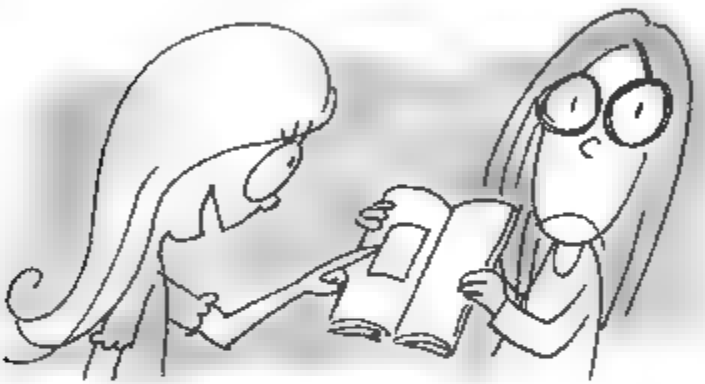
Mr. Evans throbbed only a little, which means I got a B. Isabella and I made up at lunch, which was good, since it looks like Mr. Prince is gone forever, now that Miss Bruntford is back. (I could just die!) I'm certain he'll write me when he settles in at his next job.

I admitted to Isabella that her kitten was the cutest pet in the photos, and she said that Stinker had never looked better.

Saturday 28

But then she asked if she could read it

Awkward, right? Since on one or two occasions, I may have written something unpleasant about Angeline, and I REALLY wanted her to fix my hair. So I said I'd let her read the love poems that Mr. Prince had sent me, but that was it.



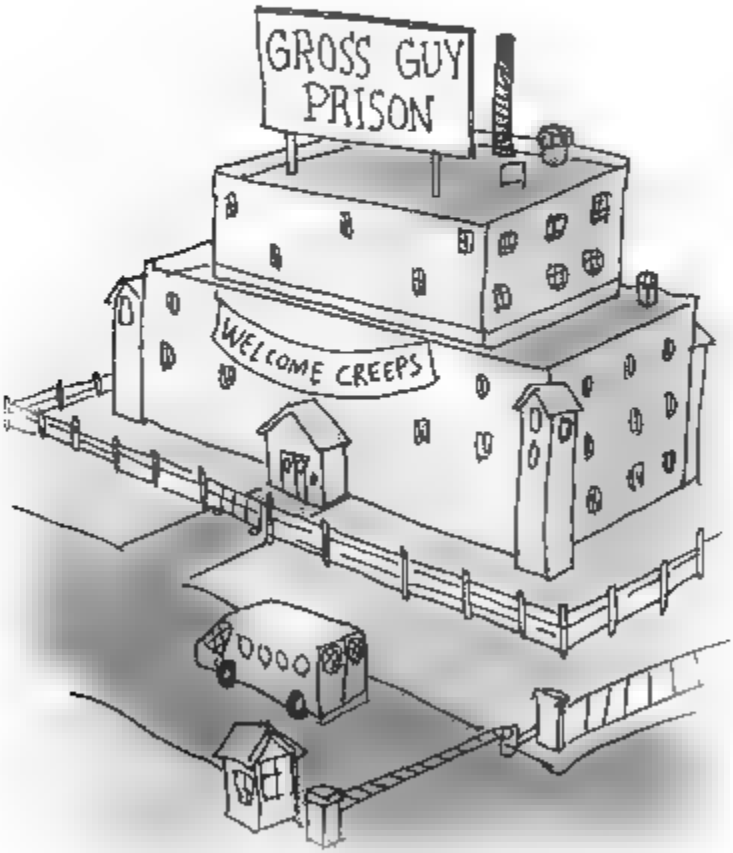
Angeline looked a little startled, and read the first one and smiled. Then she read the second one and grinned.

"These aren't from Mr. Prince," she said.

"What makes you say that?" I asked, getting angry, but not angry enough to walk away from a hair makeover.

"I get a lot of notes, Jamie. I can identify

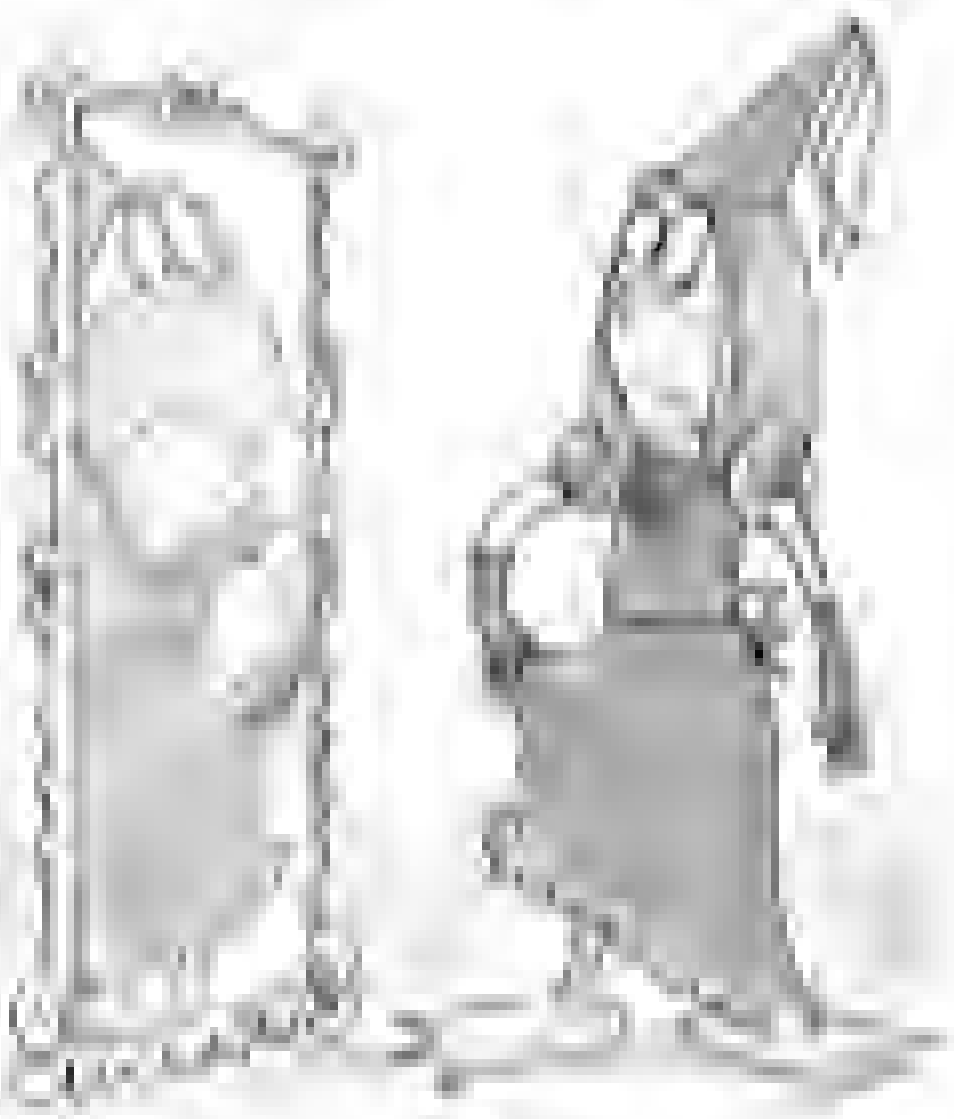
"And by the way, Jamie, if you really do th nk that a teacher or any o d guy has sent you a poem like this, he totally belongs in Gross Guy Prison. You're in **middle school.** Seriously. You shou d know better."



SLAM!

Sunday 21

Isabella told me that the reason she had gone through with the photo assignment is that she was jealous of me. Weeks ago, when I attempted my own version of Zone Shampooing on Hudson and was led away by Mr. Evans, I hadn't seen Hudson's reaction. Isabella saw **pure love** squirting out of Hudson's ears. Zone Shampooing had worked.



Jamie Kelly

Think you can handle another Jamie Kelly diary? Then check out:

[illegible]

DEAR DUMB DIARY,

CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF JAMIE KELLY?

CHECK OUT HER OTHER DEAR DUMB DIARY BOOKS!

YEAR TWO #1: School Rules! This Is Gone On Long Enough!

YEAR TWO: #2: The Super Twins are Super Annoying

YEAR TWO: #3: Nobody's Perfect, I'm As Close As It Gets

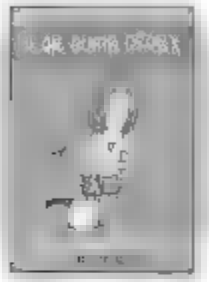
YEAR TWO #4: What I Don't Know Might Hurt Me

WWW.SCHOLASTIC.COM/DEARDUMBDIARY

#1: Let's Pretend This Never Happened

#2: My Pants Are Haunted

#3: Am I the Princess or the Frog?



#4: Never Do Anything Ever

#5: Can Adults Become Human?

#6: The Problem With Here Is That It's Where I'm From

#7: Never Underestimate Your Dumbness

#8: It's Not My Fault I Know Everything

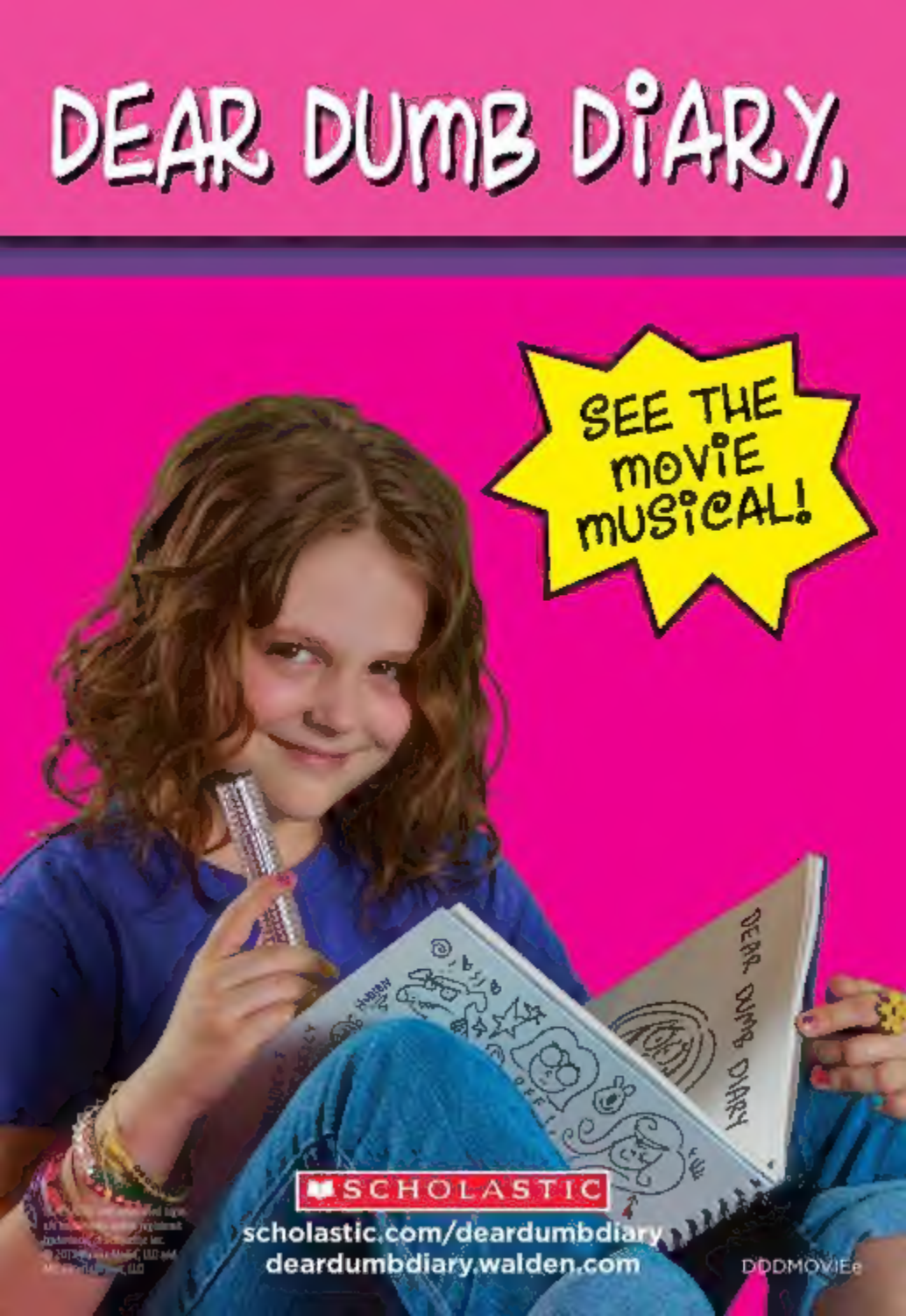
#9: That's What Friends Aren't For

#10: The Worst Things in Life Are Also Free

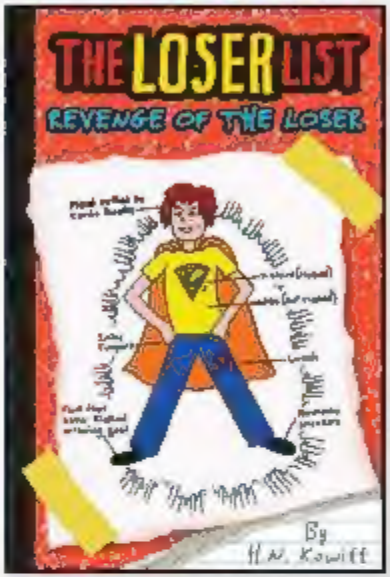
#11: Okay, So Maybe I Do Have Superpowers

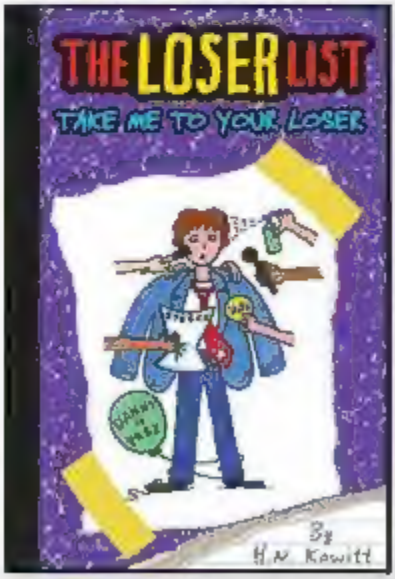
#12: Me + Just Like You, Only Better)

DEAR DUMB DIARY,



Some guys just can't win... but Danny never stops trying!





SCHOLASTIC and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

SCHOLASTIC
scholastic.com

Available in print and eBook editions

LOSER15 FC14n

About Jim Benton

Jim Benton is not a middle-school girl, but do not hold that against him. He has managed to make a living out of being funny, anyway.

He is the creator of many licensed properties, some for big kids, some for little kids, and some for grown-ups who, frankly, are probably behaving like little kids.

You may already know his properties: It's Happy Bunny™ or Catwad™, and of course you already know about Dear Dumb Diary.

He's created a kids' TV series, designed clothing, and written books.

Jim Benton lives in Michigan with his spectacular wife and kids. They do not have a dog, and they especially do not have a vengeful beagle. This is his first series for Scholastic.

Jamie Kelly has no idea that Jim Benton, or you, or anybody is reading her diaries. So, please, please, please don't tell her.

Jim Benton's Tales from Mackerel Middle School

LOVE IS IN THE AIR.

SO YOU MIGHT JUST WANT TO STAY INSIDE.

Dear Dumb Diary,

I got another poem today from You-Know-Who . . .

She is the fairest blossom, true,
She blooms in any weather.
But I must love her from afar.
We'll never be together.

Signed, M. P.

Can you believe the pain he's in? His suffering? The crushing heartache he endures every time he sees me? Gosh, it just makes me so happy!

SNEAK A PEEK INSIDE THE DIARY OF JAMIE KELLY, WHO PROMISES THAT EVERYTHING SHE WRITES IS TRUE . . . OR AT LEAST AS TRUE AS IT NEEDS TO BE.

SCHOLASTIC

www.scholastic.com

Cover art by Jamie Kelly with the help of Jim Benton
Cover design by Steve Scott

RL5 008 and up